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Transparent Education AKA Gaming

Much of our educational system is operating in many ways as it started with slate and chalk. While the slate and chalk have been replaced with later forms, the delivery is still much the same—lecture style with teacher as “sage on the stage.” Learners, however, are adapting to the new technology landscape and are bored with traditional lecture style education. Most of our children today have ready access to computers and are experienced with computer games, instant messaging and text messaging. Perhaps it is time to consider adapting to the new technology landscape and build creative ways to satisfy the needs of these new learners.

Prensky refers to these new learners who have been surrounded by technology their whole lives as **digital natives**. Others who have lived longer and know life before mainstream technology are referred to as **digital immigrants**. This really puts the situation into perspective. We all know that natives have a firmer grasp on the culture than immigrants do. So it is with the culture of technology.

Anytime there is change there will be resistance. Even when the change will ultimately be a positive one, there is the dreaded learning curve to implement the change. This is often true in “training type” situations. For instance how many times have we had to implement a new management system? When we

implemented WebCT as our course platform at UVSC we had and still have those who refuse to embrace it even with all of our wonderful training efforts. ;-)

Prensky speaks of professors wanting to implement a new 3-d CAD software to engineers who had successfully used a 2-d CAD system for years. While the new software clearly had many advantages, there was still the dreaded learning curve. Until Prensky hired a Hollywood scriptwriter to help create the urgency of accomplishing the tasks in the game [AKA training] this new software did not take off.

There are many applications for using gaming to enhance learning. My son used to be an avid collector of Pokemon cards. He knew the name of every character, history and evolution. We can take this same type of learning and apply it to many subjects in a gaming modality—geography for instance. This could assist people in learning names, populations, capitals of all the nations in the world in a fun frame of a game.

At Utah Valley State College we are beginning to use the gaming technology to build interactivity into our distance courses. We have wonderful resources who can invent anything anyone can think up. Like I said, we are just beginning, but you can go to the following link to see a sample of some of our gaming forms. www.uvsc.edu/disted/playstation

It is interesting to see where the technology will take us. As with anything new, first we are resistant then eventually we embrace the change. I have always thought video games were such a waste of time. I am beginning to see now, if this technology is channeled it can be a valuable educational tool.

I have a saying in my office that says: “If it’s **difficult**, you are **doing**, something **wrong**.” Education is difficult for many people, myself included. I really have to work at it. Learning should be fun. If we can use the technology to make it fun then we will have **Transparent Education**. We will be learning without realizing it!

References

Prensky, M. (2000). Digital Game-Based Learning. New York: McGraw Hill.

Prensky, M, (2001), Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants. *On the Horizon*, NCB University Press, Vol 9 No. 5, October 2001

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